567 them for kola nuts with the Achanti [Ashanti] or for loaves of salt
439 at Timbuktu. Although they were always transported by roundabout routes to prevent them from finding their way back to their homes, still some of them always managed to escape.

492 The naba used the young yemdado as soroné or grooms, and
567 they would often [93] take the young and attractive women (yempoksé) as wives.

641 The sale of free men. Neither the emperor of the Mossi nor
681 his vassals sold their subjects. Individuals who were regarded as dangerous were simply put to death unless they took refuge in a bangaré to avoid being executed, as has been noted above. Some were sent to the emperor to be made into eunuchs.

304 The facial tattoos worn by the Mossi clearly distinguished them
567 from neighboring peoples. However, if by accident or because of
689 need a naba sold a free man and the latter was claimed by his relatives, the chief was required to buy back the slave or to indemnify his family. We have described above how a canton chief was exiled by the emperor for having sold free Mossi.

583 Concealed selling of women and children. In the chapter on
562 marriage customs among the Mossi we shall show that a native
567 Moaga did not demand a bride price because he did not want to feel that he was selling his daughter. There is no doubt that this rule has exceptions. Indeed, we shall show that the failure to pay a debt, a bout of drunkenness, or a favor received might suffice to mortgage the future of a daughter, even though at the time she might be a small child and quite unaware of her fate. In any event, there would be no question of her expressing any opinion, since her wishes are never taken into account. During periods of famine -- which have been
[131] occurring almost [94] regularly for some years -- a small basket of millet is enough to make a father promise his daughter. In the same way, we regret to say, a great many girls are promised in exchange for trifling sums at the time the poll tax is paid.

567 Rights of slaves. Since he is regarded as an inferior being, the yemdaogo (slave) has no well-defined rights. He is required to perform all kinds of domestic work and must give unquestioning obedience to his master and the master's family. Besides his essential duties, however, he is permitted to do some farming for himself, practice some trade, or to raise cattle, with the proceeds constituting

584 visits and presents a few small gifts. This state of affairs goes on for one or several years. Finally the head of the family calls together his little council and makes known his intention of giving So-and-So's daughter to X... from such-and-such village. There is seldom a refusal since he has sole authority to give the girls in marriage. The young man is then sent to make the acquaintance of his prospective in-laws. As soon as he is presented, he makes a small gift (usually [175] 100 to 1,000 cowries are given).

If the girl is the oldest daughter, her fiancé is expected to bring a sheep, a hoe, a guinea hen, and some beer.

585 The young man is then told the date on which he may send for his fiancée. He has nothing further to do, except to make some preparations and to wait. When the girl is brought to him, he kills some chickens and a goat if he has one, and he has food prepared for the girl's escort. He must also give cowries to them, the amount depending on his own resources.

In many villages the girls married in this way never leave their husbands for fear of being cursed by their parents and condemned never to see their native villages again.

574 851 Finally, if the wife gives birth, the husband sends a chicken to the village elder and the wife goes there to visit.

787 584 Girls who are hostile to a husband. These are girls whom the soothsayers point out as hostile to a husband.

Although these girls are promised at an early age, just like other girls, they must not know that they are engaged, and if their fiancés should by chance come to visit, they are treated like ordinary guests who have just happened by.

583 When such a girl reaches seventeen, her fiancé arranges with her family to send her to the waterhole, the well, or the nearest market.

[176] The fiancé selects a group of his strongest friends, plies them with beer, and sends them off with instructions to abduct his fiancée on the way. The latter, accompanied by a woman or by other girls, is surrounded unexpectedly and seized by strong arms despite the resistance, often quite vigorous, of her brothers or her companions. She is then taken to the home of her husband.

A few days later some people are designated to take the girl's effects to her husband's home and to receive the traditional gifts.

837 588 548 [586] Free Marriage. The only marriage which can be called free, since it is accepted by both parties, is that of a woman who is unable to endure her first husband and leaves her village with the intention of becoming a prostitute. Divorce is quite rare because the Moaga does not readily agree to it. As she passes through a village, she asks for hospitality, and the news soon spreads that a "free" woman is staying at such-and-such a place. The young men hasten to her and seek to win her favors. Gifts are sent to her, and her hostess is used as go-between. Nine times out of ten, the woman accepts the candidate preferred by her hostess. After some questions concerning his origins and circumstances, one of the young men is accepted as a temporary lover. His comrades come to his aid, and for a few days there is a veritable festival in the village. There is a slight change in the [177] regular fare, since meat is added to the mush; chickens, raised with considerable difficulty, are used for this special treat. This semblance of marriage is thus celebrated. As has been pointed out, however, there has been no divorce, and the deserted husband soon learns the whereabouts of his wife. As soon as he finds out what village she is in -- it may be 100 kilometers away -- he promptly sets out, carrying in a sheepskin enough ground millet for the journey and 500 to 1,000 cowries. He also carries a rooster which, along with the shells, will be offered to the chief of the canton where the lover lives, to whom he will make his claim.

[578] Unions of this sort give rise to three-quarters of the quarrels with which the canton or province chiefs have to deal. A young Moaga who desires peace of mind never regularizes the situation by a so-called marriage even though he may not be able to resist the temptation to harbor the woman for a few days. In any event the affair is easily broken off since sooner or later the woman, eager for change, will want a new lover.

583 Thus, it may be said that although forced marriage has the disadvantage of having a girl marry without her consent, still it also has advantages and a degree of security because the woman, fearing [178] her parents' wrath, rarely leaves her husband. Furthermore, this type of marriage is vastly preferable from the standpoint of peace

583 to the sort of concubinage that "free marriage" is, as practiced in Mossi country.

The Situation of the Betrothed Couple during the Engagement

584 Generally speaking, the fiancé is supposed to avoid his betrothed before marriage. They treat each other with a kind of shy reserve.

Aside from the gifts made to the village elders and some cowries given to the future in-laws at the time of his first visit, no further demands are made on the fiancé.

584 684 The young man is formally forbidden to carry on an intrigue with a woman in the girl's village. If he does so, not only may the engagement be broken, but the lover may never again set foot in the village on paid of death.

Breaking the Engagement

584 When an engagement is broken, the gifts received need not be returned. On the other hand, the death of the girl is not regarded as breaking the engagement; the family must, sooner or later, offer another daughter to the young man to replace the girl who died.

An engagement may be broken [179] automatically in case of adultery, discussed below, or in the event of a quarrel between the two families.

Marriage Between First Cousins

587 Marriage between first cousins is not allowed. There can be no valid union between the children of a brother and sister, between a man and the daughter of either his father's or his mother's brother.

588 582 751 However, it sometimes happens -- inadvertently -- that a girl who has been given in marriage in a very distant village may find that her husband is a descendant of a great-grandparent (material or paternal) in the same family as her own. Had this been known, the marriage would not have taken place. Ordinarily, distant relationship is not discovered until long after the marriage, after complicated genealogical research. In that case, one of the pair, usually the wife,

585 The following morning the new wife returns to the hut of her "mother." She is summoned by her husband several nights in a row before he resumes the practice of receiving each wife in turn.

The Bride Price. The Basket of the Fiancée

583 Bride price. Mossi custom does not require a bride price. The one thousand to several thousand cowries that are required, depending on the man's resources, plus chickens, a sheep and beer, are not a bride price, properly speaking, or "selling a daughter." Nothing is asked which could not be repaid one day without too much difficulty.

585 The fiancée's basket. The basket of the fiancée contains the girl's clothes, some soap, some karite butter, some cowries, gourds, and ladles. The basket is carried by one of the women in the cortege.

The cortege. The fiancée's cortege is usually composed of a young girl, a woman who has borne children, and a boy.

They proceed to the house of the village elder. [182] The relatives of the bridegroom provide food for them for several days. Finally, they are given a farewell dinner consisting of baskets of millet cakes and mutton, goat, or merely some chickens. They are also given cowries.

585 431 In addition to these gifts, the sum of 444 or 1,400 cowries (the "virginity price") is sewn into a sack and sent to the girl's mother. If the bride was given by a chief, he is entitled to from 2,000 to 3,000 cowries if the husband is an ordinary Moaga, 10,000 to 50,000 cowries if the husband himself is a naba. In this last case, the women in the cortege receive skirts, and the boy, a robe.

585 152 Note. While it is true that among many peoples a girl goes to her husband joyfully, it is quite the contrary in Mossi country. There is a real struggle to separate the girl from her parents. Many lose sleep and their appetites. On the day of departure they weep bitterly, and those who do not are insulted by the old women.

584 If the girl absolutely refuses to go to her betrothed, her father
[562] tries to persuade her but does not use force. If the girl persists in her refusal in spite of everything — this is extremely rare — the father returns to the betrothed any money he may have borrowed, but he does not return anything that was given him spontaneously. If the father happens to die after he has pledged his daughter, his heir may not retract the promise and give his sister or niece to another man,
[428] but he will from then on receive the gifts himself. If the betrothed man dies, his heir gets the girl promised to the father, with the condition that he will continue to pay the bride price.

584 Contrary to the situation in European countries, the woman, con-
583 sidered as valuable property, is paid for; it is not she who brings a dowry, but the man who wants her as his wife. If a man has an eye on a friend's daughter, he goes to visit the father even though the girl may still be a babe in arms. He is careful not to state what he has in mind. He comes sometimes with a few cowries, sometimes with a chicken, a piece of salt, perhaps even a sheep. The child's father understands, and when he has some work to be done, a field to be weeded, millet to be threshed, huts to be roofed, he makes it known to the suitor, who hastens to work for the man whose son-in-law he should like to become.

After a time, the father says to the suitor: "You have treated me well. I am pleased with you. I will treat you well." The suitor understands and becomes even more assiduous. He sends his friends; and on every festive occasion he presents the father of his intended with a few chickens. There is no outright promise, no betrothal in the usual sense of the term. Sometimes the father has financial difficulties, pressing debts, or he has seen a fine garment he should like to buy, and he has a request for money conveyed to his friend. The latter knows that he is loaning without return, or rather loaning against the girl. He refuses only if he is actually unable to furnish the sum; for if negotiations were ever to be broken, the child's father would have to return the money advanced, and this would greatly embarrass him and thus prevent him from profiting through the transaction. In any case, it is extremely rare for a promised girl not to be given to the man who has made the first advances and who has been favorably received. A father who should promise his daughter to a man after receiving gifts for some time from another would be held in very poor esteem and forced to return any money he might

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583 have borrowed. In addition, he would expose himself and the preferred suitor to the vengeance of the rejected one.

583 The bride price is not exorbitant. The total gifts, spread over a period of years, amount to some fifty francs, without counting the work days. Nevertheless, it requires sufficient means to secure at least the necessary cowries. Besides, the child's father prefers to give her to someone who already boasts a certain fame and some wealth, in short, to an elderly man. /30/ This is why children are promised to old dotards, and white-haired men are paired with young girls; while the old men's sons of marriageable age cannot get wives. If the father has the means to pay the bride price, he carefully refrains from helping his son, even if the latter has found a match to his liking.

587 It is true that all the father's wives are inherited by the oldest son,
578 who gives some to his younger brothers; but this occurs only at the old man's death, and this may not happen for a long time. This ex-
593 plains why the oldest son wishes for his father's death, and why the father sends the son away for fear of a premature end. It is only fair to add that some men, with a better understanding of their own interests, marry off their sons as soon as they are old enough.

595 Polygamy exists among the Mossi as in all Black countries. The
[556] wealth of a man is gauged by the number of his wives. Women furnish hands to till the soil, for the wife works in the fields like the husband. Women also furnish children, and if these are daughters, young men will come to offer their services (dakonré) and one day take the girls in marriage; or the father will receive gifts. If the children are boys, they will later aid the father in his work. In these countries where each lives for himself alone, where selfishness reigns supreme, polygamy is easily explained, but it undoubtedly results in a lower birth rate. White-bearded old men cannot have children as numerous and sound as young men in their prime, and the latter, deprived of wives, wear themselves out with their excesses. It is true that those who can afford a dozen wives are few; most have to be content with two, three, or four. Some nabas, nevertheless, own veritable herds of women, and this is certainly a grievous abuse.

[837] Their wives are numbered in the hundreds. The greatest moral disorder reigns in those harems, where the boys who serve as grooms and pages spend most of their time among their master's wives. This explains the precautions taken by the women's owners and the eunuchs of the Moro Naba, as well as the Poënaba and his sinister duties.

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326 As we can see, the common patriarchal family is found among those blacksmiths who live in groups.

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596 The second Mossi family type is one we had occasion to mention here and there in the section on work. Contrary to the first type, which is found only in a special section of the population, this one occurs throughout the Mossi but as a rare /544/ and exceptional case. All the households in the family still live together, but every household works for itself. This is the type we studied among the Nankana and other groups of cultivator-breeders under the name of Nankana type No. 3 /not translated/.

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592 We come now to those Mossi family types which are widespread rather than exceptional. They correspond to the Nankana type No. 4 (every household lives separately and works separately), or rather they depart from it in the direction of even greater decommunalization. There are three variants, namely, one that corresponds to the pure Nankana type No. 4, and two where decommunalization is more accentuated. Let us describe them in turn.

Here is the first variant:

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596 1. The households live separately. As soon as a young man marries, he settles on his own with the help of his family. When a family head gives one of the family's sons a wife, he uses a vacant soukala if there is one available. If there is none, the son builds a new soukala with the help of his father and of the family head.

2. Every household works separately (except for the clearing of family fields), procures its own food, clothing, and subsistence. The married son, however, comes and helps his father a little now and then. During the dry season, for example, he helps him repair the soukala. Or else he offers him small gifts from time to time.

When someone, on marrying, settles separately, the head of the family usually gives him some family field that was once cleared and cultivated and has since lain fallow.

3. Although households work separately, the children of the households are not given in marriage by their father and mother, but by the head of the family. The latter buys wives for the boys, [583] but he also gives the daughters in marriage and receives the bride price.

596 with the help of his father and family head (which is by far the
423 most frequent occurrence), /548/ while in such a case it had for-
178 merly been considered family property. Finally, the soukala came to be regarded in every case as personal property and to be transmitted for that reason to the oldest son. This, incidentally, is the same evolution that applied to property in general, as we shall see shortly.

593 Now, here is the third and last variant of the prevailing Mossi family type. Nowadays, this variant is by far the most widespread.

1. Every household lives separately, works separately, and procures its own food and subsistence. The help of neighbors is enlisted to clear the fields.

584 2. Every household gives its own children in marriage. The family head no longer does so.

593 As soon as a man has a son, he chooses a little girl who will go to the boy when he reaches puberty. He visits the girl's relatives from time to time and offers them gifts.

584 When the girl is old enough to be married, he takes 50,000
583 cowries (if he is wealthy), skirt cloths, salt, kola nuts, and gives it
593 all to the relatives. Then, the old women in the daughter's family lead her to the home of the betrothed man's relatives. The father kills a sheep, makes a lot of couscous, buys dolo to celebrate her arrival. Then he offers the girl six or seven baskets containing respectively 1,000, 2,000, 3,000, 4,000, 5,000, 6,000, and 7,000 cowries. The young man himself gives his betrothed four or five skirts. If he is very wealthy, he gives her one or two little girls as slaves.

585 On the evening when the wedding is celebrated, the father asks
426 one of his neighbors to lend him a hut, and the young married pair are sent there all alone (they will remain there as long as their soukala is not built). On the morrow, the feasting begins. People dance and feast for seven days at the gates of the father's soukala, at least when the girl is a virgin. If she is not, the feasting is curtailed but nevertheless lasts for another three days.

583 When the father is poor, he offers a few kola nuts to the girl's
591 /549/ father (six or ten). He gives the father and mother some firewood he gathered in the bush, straw to make séko /Tr.: mats/ for door, 2,000 cowries, a skirt cloth. He kills a sheep to make

583 591 couscous, which he offers to the relatives. Then he takes the girl away. He asks a neighbor for a hut to harbor the young couple on their wedding night and over the next few weeks. They stay there for only a month or two, until their soukala is built.

583 The bride price actually varies from region to region among the Mossi. We have just seen it range from 2,000 to 50,000 cowries. Earlier, we saw it set at 25,000. At Kombisiguiri it amounts to a mere 1,000. The young man's father visits the young girl's father with a chicken and 500 cowries; then he comes to see him a second time, again with a chicken and 500 cowries. There is no other bride price. Those who do not have a chicken to offer replace it with a bundle of firewood or a straw séko. In short, a girl here is worth 30 sous (the two chickens being worth 0.50 franc between them, and the 1,000 cowries amounting to one franc).

591 [431] Among rich people the young couple may remain seven, nine, or even twelve months in their neighbors' house. They present the latter with gifts, and during this period of time they proceed to build a soukala, or rather to have one built. The young man's father helps his son in this undertaking.

593 431 626 The young husband, now settled on his own, will henceforth work on his own account. He has become in turn the head of a soukala, but if he obtains a lot of millet or other grain he offers gifts to his father. If he becomes wealthy and makes no such gifts, the neighbors will insult him. He always makes gifts, therefore, for fear of being insulted. A son who marries, as a rule, builds his soukala as near as possible to that of his father.

543 Finally, let us add that the father usually buys his son's kitchen utensils when the boy settles on his own.

3. When the head of a family dies, the younger brother inevitably takes command of the family, but all the property, whatever its nature, goes to the children of the deceased and more especially to his oldest son. There is no longer any family real estate or movable property, or else nothing is regarded as such any longer.

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/550/ The eldest son takes his father's soukala and everything that goes with it, fields, slaves, livestock, father's wives. He shares them, however, with his brothers and even with his sisters.

584 596 daughter; (2) when the father is in extreme penury, he gives his still unpromised daughter to some rich native who, with the customary gifts, will help him in his need, since the gifts of the fiancé go to the man who promised the young girl; (3) the first daughter in a household, [603] whether or not she is the only daughter, must be promised by her maternal grandfather and not by the head of the family."

This constitutes, I believe, a curious vestige of matriarchy which doubtless refers to those very distant times when the Mossi family revolved around the maternal rather than the paternal line.

4. The mother of the young girl. "The girl's mother," says Vadier, "is sometimes consulted. Her husband merely asks her if she is satisfied with the choice he has made in agreement with the head of the family. Her answer, however, is given no weight whatever.

"The fiancé's mother is not even consulted."

Such at least is the theory. In reality, no doubt, the mother of the young girl often has more authority than the theory supposes.

431 583 [171] Gifts.—Bride price is nonexistent in Mossi marriage. This is a very important point which differentiates the Mossi and even, I believe, the Voltaic /237/ tribes in general, from the Mandé groups, such as the Bambara and Malinké, where bride price does exist and is actually quite high (I say quite high, considering the general poverty of the Sudanese). I did not emphasize this sufficiently in my Noir du Soudan in the chapter concerning the Mossi family, pages 548 and 549. I did mention that the price paid to win a Mossi girl of the Ouagadougou region ranged from 1, 500 cowries (1. 50 francs) to 50, 000 cowries (50 francs). In fact, these are gifts rather than bride price.

Although there is no bride price, properly speaking, the gifts have an important role.

"After the promise of marriage," says Vadier, "the future husband must come every year, after the filikienga /a feast/, to bring a few small gifts to the head of the family and to the girl's mother. These consist as a rule of a little millet, salt, a few hundred cowries, a mat, or two or three crudely made séko /coarse matting/.

"As for the father, he receives no gifts, which does not mean that he does not benefit from those received by his wife or by the head of the family.

"Likewise, the girl receives no gifts. Moreover, she may not utilize the commodities or foodstuffs given to her mother.

"The gifts offered during the long betrothal period cannot be of great value. A prospective husband who should bring 5, 000 or 6, 000

431 cowries to the head of the family would be rejected. The head of the
583 family would certainly not fail to tell him that in promising a girl he intended to give her as a bride and not to sell her. Should the husband insist, he would simply be driven away."

581 Marriage, therefore, is not regarded as purchase among the Mossi,
586 contrary to Malinké and Bambara practices, and in this sense it is imbued among them with greater dignity. Unfortunately, this absence of a bride price permits an easy rupture of the marriage ties, while this is not the case among the Bambara and Malinké where the woman is bound more firmly to her duties. The household, therefore, is less securely grounded among the Mossi than among the Mandé, and thus evil results from good.

581 As a rule, the marriage bond is much looser and more fragile among
583 the Voltaic tribes (Bobo, Gourounsi, Mossi, Habbé/Habe/, etc.) than among the Mandé groups (Bambara, Malinké, etc.), and this is related to the lack of a real bride price. Where there is a bride price, the young girl is sold. If she wishes to leave her husband once she is married, however, considering that a bride price of some importance is difficult to refund (since improvident family heads immediately set out to squander it, while more serious people use it right away to buy a girl for some young man of the family), it has become customary to oppose categorically any demands to break the marriage bond. Thus, while betrothal has greater dignity among the Voltaic tribes, marriage itself has more staying power and more seriousness among the Mandé, and the household has greater soundness. /238/

Now to return to the Mossi.

431 Let us note first that the offering of gifts allows for some flexibility.
583 A rich young man will make much more important gifts than a poor
556 man. He will not give a large sum of cowries, but he may give significant amounts of clothing, foodstuffs (salt, etc.), and animals to the head of his fiancée's family or to her mother. On the other hand, a poor man will give a bundle of firewood which he has just gathered in the bush and a chicken, and this payment will be considered sufficient.

431 Although the girl is not sold, her fiancé or his father are required
583 to make the gifts prescribed by custom.

"The failure to make those gifts prescribed by custom," says Vadier, "has serious consequences. Let us examine the various situations which might arise.

431 "I. If by negligence, forgetfulness, or because of an absence
583 (journey), the prospective husband does not make the annual gifts, he will be refused the girl on the day when he comes to have her taken to his home, and he will lose all his rights over her.

"Nevertheless, he will regain all his privileges if in one installment he pays to the head of the girl's family and to her mother all the gifts which he ought to have made during the period of his absence or forgetfulness.

"The head of the family cannot refuse this collective gift and thereby oppose the marriage.

"II. The husband has forgotten to make the gifts and does not come to the home of the family head when the young girl has reached puberty.

"A. If he lives in the area, the failure to call on the head of the family at the required time is regarded as a relinquishment of his rights over the girl. The head of the family may then dispose of her again.

"B. The fiancé has been away on a journey for a long time and is still absent when the girl reaches puberty.

"The head of the family has the fiancé's brother called to him. He offers the girl to him as his bride. The brother is not required to accept, and if he does not, the head of the family recovers all his rights over the girl."

582 Celebration of the marriage. Consummation. —"The girl must have reached puberty (15 or 16 years) in order to be taken to her husband's hut. It is even customary to wait six months or a year after she was first in a state of zim (zim means "blood" in Mossi).

As for the husband, it is equally necessary that he must have attained the age of 17 or 18.

585 The formalities of the marriage ceremony are very simple in Yatenga.

When the betrothed girl has reached puberty, the husband calls on the family head to ask for her. The family head can tell him /239/ to wait six months or a year at most, a delay which the fiancé is required to observe, but usually the head of the family replies that his
431 future wife may be fetched in a few days. The fiancé then hands him
273 a bag and two goatskins full of millet and withdraws. This grain is used to make dolo which is drunk by the girl's entire family.

585 Each woman living in the same soukala makes a gift of one or two
431 gourds to the girl's mother. The father and the head of the family give her two large baskets. These objects will make up the bride's trousseau.

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613 778 602 554 usually been banished from their patrilineage for some illegal act or had voluntarily left home after a dispute over inheritance of the nam, goods, or women.

The fact that noble lineages often absorbed sisters' sons was only one of the reasons why such lineages survived and expanded, even if only at the expense of other lineages within the local society. Another reason for this growth was that the nobles, possessing the nam and its prerogatives, received more wives than the commoners. They had more children and thus multiplied more rapidly. Mossi lineages were generally exogamous through their whole depth, but exogamy became increasingly mandatory as the segments became smaller. Marriage within a maximal lineage was permitted only when some of its members had moved so far away from its original locality that the original ties were either forgotten or ignored. The Mossi [173] have myths in which the lineage founder gives his overly numerous descendants permission to marry certain of their relatives. Even so, if a marriage was actually found to have occurred between distant relatives, appropriate sacrifices had to be made to the ancestors.

613 Marriage was also forbidden between persons who could trace a common maternal ancestor. But because the time depth here was very shallow, total bilateral exogamy was practiced to a depth of only four or five generations. Of course, the differential concern with genealogies between those who had access to the nam and those who did not, had an effect on the extent to which exogamy was practiced.

613 587 Most Mossi marriages were based on an exchange of women between two lineages linked by a long-term series of reciprocal exchanges of goods and services. Women were regarded as the most valuable part of this system. In theory, only the Boodkasma of a babissi had the right to give a woman as a wife to another lineage. However, the initiators of the reciprocal relations between lineage segments were often babissi heads, Yirisobodamba (heads of nuclear families), or individual lineage members. When a man from one lineage "made friends" with a member of another and rendered him a service or received a favor from him, their respective lineages were considered to be involved. The corporate nature of the lineage segment was acknowledged by all persons engaged in reciprocal relations, and the relations between two individuals were seen as relations between their lineages.

When a man wished to give a daughter to a friend as a wife, he had to consult his Boodkasma, who then gave the woman to the friend's Boodkasma. The latter accepted the woman as a wife for the lineage rather than for the man involved. The lineage retained its rights *in gene-*

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tricem over the woman and turned over the rights *in uxorem* to the man. 613 583
This point is very important, because, by accepting the woman as a wife for his lineage segment, the Boodkasma accepted the responsibility of giving a woman in return to the other lineage. The stress placed on the lineage in wife-exchange was due to the corporate nature of this kinship group, as well as to the prohibition against a man's exchanging his own sisters or daughters as wives. He had to use other women in the lineage. It was believed that if this rule were violated, the women exchanged would also "exchange lives"—i.e., the fate of one would automatically reflect the fate of the other.

The Mossi marriage system worked to the advantage of both the elder males of the lineage segment and the nobles of the ruling lineage. Since the older men of the various groups controlled the resources of their kinsmen, they usually initiated "friendship" relations and obtained wives for their group. The more impartial elders distributed the women equitably among their fellow kinsmen, but occasionally older men kept the wives for themselves, knowing that in time these wives would be inherited by their younger kinsmen. Younger men had to wait until their elders died, do without wives, or establish "friendly" relations with older men. Some young men and newcomers to the district appealed to the chief for *pughsiudse* (from *pugho*, the diminutive of *pagha*, "woman," and *siubo*, "to give with the hope of profitable return"). These pughsiudse were women whom the chief received from his subjects and whom he subsequently gave out as wives on condition that their husbands give him their eldest daughters as future pughsiudse.*

The nobility benefited by the Mossi marriage system because, as a 613
group, they received more women than they gave out in the exchange of 565
wives. Furthermore, this enabled them to make more marriage arrange- 562
ments. This does not mean that a differential value was placed on women of different status groups. The Mossi tended to regard all women as equally valuable, but commoners tended to be more generous to noble friends than vice versa.

The nobles also received wives from their "brother," the district chief. 613
He received women as presents and signs of fealty and homage from most 565
of the groups in his district, and also from groups outside his district. He 583
kept some of these women as wives; others he used as pughsiudse; and still others he gave to his lineage segments. Some nobles had another method of obtaining wives, namely, by abduction. A nobleman who saw the daughter or wife of a commoner in the market place often encouraged her to desert her father or husband and come to him. Her relatives usually

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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appealed to the district chief, and occasionally the woman was sent back. A nobleman set on having a certain girl as a wife usually had small bracelets like those worn by all noble wives placed on her ankles. Once this was done, the chief could not be compelled to send her back to her parents, and any man who tried to retrieve her was guilty of interfering with a nobleman's wife and could be killed for it. In fact, only the male relatives of noblemen's wives could converse with them without running the risk of being apprehended and executed.

The district was the most important unit in the Mossi principalities and kingdoms. It was on this level that the Mossi nobility came into direct contact with the various social and ethnic groups of the society. Here, kinship and affinal ties linked the conquerors and the conquered, the ancient and recent nobility, the refugees from conflicts over the nam and the resident aliens, in a network of social, ritual, economic, and political relationships. It was also on this level that myths and traditions legitimized most effectively the Mossi socio-economic and political system as well as the relationships between the various social and ethnic groups.

The number and size of the Mossi districts varied greatly from one principality or kingdom to another. Some districts were large and wealthy, with a number of large villages; smaller districts had a larger proportion of small villages and hamlets. The average number of these small units was probably between fifty and sixty-five per district. The population of the districts ranged from 10,000 to 35,000 persons. Some *tense* (villages) had as many as 5,000 inhabitants and some as few as 50. The average village had about 500 inhabitants. But regardless of size, all Mossi districts and component villages had basically the same structure and fulfilled the same functions. The structure of Nobere district is representative. Nobere covered approximately 200 square miles. It was bounded on the east by a district called Manga, on the north by the districts of Toece and Djiba, and on the west and south by the Red Volta River. A census taken in 1905, just nine years after the European conquest, showed the Nobere population to be about 13,200.[10] In 1955 approximately 10,000 persons inhabited 24 villages and hamlets scattered through the more inhabitable part of the district.

The number of villages and hamlets in Nobere district apparently fluctuated. Villages were occasionally abandoned, while small hamlets grew into prominent settlements. The people of Nobere always tried to establish their villages as close to the Red Volta as possible in order to utilize the more fertile lands. But they were repeatedly driven back by disease and